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Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Economic and Social Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV). It is structured in two main sections. The first provides regional perspectives on two global processes under active consideration during the reporting period, namely the post-2015 development agenda and the third International Conference on Financing for Development. It also highlights the role of the regional commissions in supporting action on climate change in their regions on the road to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015. The second covers developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation, including additional policy matters addressed during the ministerial sessions of the regional commissions; efforts to promote coherence at the regional level, including through the respective regional coordination mechanisms convened by the regional commissions, as mandated by the Council; cooperation with non-United Nations regional organizations to promote development; and enhanced interregional cooperation among the regional commissions.

As the intergovernmental processes relating to the post-2015 development agenda, the third International Conference on Financing for Development and post-Kyoto Protocol agreement progress, much emphasis has been placed on the regional dimension and on the role of the regional commissions to support Member States in the implementation of their commitments by providing policy guidance, serving as a platform for the sharing of best practices and experiences and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation, among others. In response, the regional commissions have held consultations on the follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda and in preparation for the third International Conference on

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Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015. The regional commissions also continue to support Member States in their pursuit of climate-neutral and resilient growth. The present report synthesizes the main messages from the regional consultations on the post-2015 development agenda and on financing for development and highlights the support provided by the regional commissions on climate change.

I. Regional perspectives on the global agenda

A. Regional perspectives on a follow-up and review mechanism for the post-2015 development agenda

1. In response to the interest expressed by Member States in this regard and a request by the Secretary-General, the United Nations regional commissions (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) organized, in the second and third quarters of 2014, regional meetings to solicit views on the follow-up and review of the new agenda and to explore options based on existing mechanisms and possible new approaches. The outcomes of the meetings also served to inform the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700), issued in December 2014. In addition, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/290, the regional commissions also convened regional meetings in preparation for the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, to be held from 26 June to 8 July 2015 in New York, on the theme "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015".

2. In the Asia-Pacific region, the regional consultation on follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda was held in Bangkok on 5 and 6 August 2014. The African regional consultation was held in Addis Ababa from 21 to 23 August. The consultation in the Latin America and Caribbean region was held in Santiago on 28 and 29 August. In the ECE region, the consultation was held in Geneva on 15 and 16 September. The consultation in the Arab region was held in Tunis on 15 and 16 September. The discussions and deliberations of the regional consultations were reflected in the form of a Chair's summary produced by the respective regional commission. The summaries and other relevant documents and information are available from www.regionalcommissions.org/regional-commissions-and-Post-2015/.

3. The following is a synthesis of the main reflections and messages from the regional consultations.

1. Follow-up and review as an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda

4. The breadth and depth of the proposed sustainable development goals are unprecedented and call for action to be taken in all countries and for wide cooperation among all relevant stakeholders. A follow-up and review framework should therefore be an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda and not an afterthought. Under the principle of universality, follow-up and review should apply equally to developed and developing countries and to all stakeholders, including non-governmental actors such as civil society and the private sector. Follow-up and review should also apply to all goals and targets, including those relating to partnerships and the means of implementation, as defined in proposed sustainable development goal 17.

2. Multilayered follow-up and review framework

5. A comprehensive, multilayered and multi-stakeholder follow-up and review framework is crucial for the success of the post-2015 development agenda. The framework should ensure vertical linkages between various levels (local, national, regional and global) and horizontal linkages among actors (State and non-State) and sectors. The principle of subsidiarity should serve as a basis for the framework. According to that principle, the delivery of public goods and services is optimally achieved and monitored at each level respectively. Accordingly, the parameters and implications of the follow-up and review at the various levels ought to be defined according to the distinct functions and comparative advantages of each.

(a) National ownership and leadership

6. The backbone of a follow-up and review framework is at the national level. Consequently, the focus should be on strengthening national capacity for implementation, follow-up and review, including through greater involvement and engagement of civil society, academic institutions and the private sector from the planning to the monitoring phases. Nonetheless, review tools and monitoring mechanisms should be State-led, and based on official statistics, although the relevance of other sources of data and information was also acknowledged.

7. The post-2015 development agenda goals and targets should be nationally owned, adapted and mainstreamed into national development planning for effective follow-up and review. A periodic national review of the implementation of the sustainable development goals should be a key component of the national framework. To that end, the United Nations system could support Member States in devising national reporting mechanisms and modalities and in providing analysis to identify barriers to effective implementation. The follow-up and review framework at the global or regional level should not be used to impose conditionalities or certain development models, in particular in connection with official development assistance (ODA) and the other means of implementation.

(b) Regional dimension and the role of the regional commissions

8. The participants in the regional consultations recognized the role of the regional dimension and of the regional commissions in supporting effective regional follow-up and review, given that countries within regions shared common experiences and challenges. The regional dimension could support countries' efforts to deliver on the sustainable development goals and targets because it could strengthen their respective capabilities by encouraging them to share information, knowledge and experiences. The regional dimension could also facilitate the adjustment of global goals and targets to national and regional contexts and serve as a platform for the solution of transboundary challenges. In that regard, the regional forums on sustainable development, convened by some regional commissions with regional and other partners, were recognized as adequate platforms for follow-up and review that could complement national efforts and support regular assessments of implementation at the global level. The intergovernmental architecture available in each region was acknowledged as a means of owning and supporting the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and its review mechanism. The following are some examples of existing institutional arrangements for follow-up and review in each of the regions.

9. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development has the potential to evolve into a platform for follow-up and review of the new agenda. Partnership among existing regional and subregional mechanisms could be strengthened, such as the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its Corporate Social Responsibility Network, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and its various institutions, the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Inter-State Commission on Sustainable Development, the Pacific Islands Forum, the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development identified regional integration and connectivity as one of the priority areas for sustainable development of ESCAP subregions. The participants recognized that trade, technology and finance were essential means of implementation for the sustainable development goals.

10. In Africa, the Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda calls for "a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual accountability to underpin the post-2015 development agenda", namely "mutual accountability between the State and its citizens and between the State and development partners". The Common African Position High-level Committee suggested that consideration should be given to adapting the Panel of Eminent Persons under the African Peer Review Mechanism for the follow-up and review of post-2015 development agenda commitments. The Mechanism receives reports from peer-reviewed countries for vetting, analysis and onward transmittal to the Committee of Heads of State and Government and through that body, to the African Union.

11. In Latin American and the Caribbean, the existing intergovernmental architecture, including the ECLAC subsidiary bodies and other intergovernmental forums, were acknowledged as means of supporting the implementation and review of the agenda. On 16 April 2015, at an extraordinary session of the ECLAC Committee of the Whole, the Committee decided to launch a consultative process aimed at establishing a Latin American and Caribbean forum on sustainable development that could assist member States with the implementation and review of the new agenda. Regarding the follow-up and review framework, the Statistical Conference of the Americas, the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, for which ECLAC acts as technical secretariat, will be particularly relevant. In the Arab region, the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development is the main regional platform for supporting the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda. The potential of the Arab Sustainable Development Report as a key informative, analytical and policy tool was recognized. For any follow-up and review framework to be effective, the Arab regional development context needs to be taken into account because of the challenges relating to conflict, occupation and political transition. The participants in the regional consultations in that region identified ESCWA as providing the best regional platform to facilitate reporting on the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, information-sharing, dissemination of best practices and capacity-building.

12. In the ECE region, well-established reporting and accountability frameworks for ECE legal instruments and national performance reviews could be integrated into a post-2015 follow-up and review framework. Experience with the environmental performance reviews indicates that regular monitoring can improve

results in various policy areas. ECE plays a key role in building national statistical capacity to measure sustainability by strengthening methodologies and consolidating international standards. The work is performed in cooperation with partners such as the regional United Nations system, other regional organizations and civil society. For example, through the "Environment for Europe" process, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the green economy toolbox, ECE supports the management of transboundary challenges and issues.

(c) Effective links to the global level

13. The regional and global levels should support national processes, while facilitating the exchange of best practices. National information, analyses and lessons learned from the regional exchange of experiences can be collated and aggregated at the regional level and provided as input to the global meetings convened by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in particular the high-level political forum as a central body for sharing lessons learned at the global level.

14. Input by the regional forums on sustainable development could play an important role in ensuring the coherence of the overall follow-up and review framework, serving as a link between the national and the global by bringing together the main findings and messages on the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the regions.

3. Transparent, inclusive and participatory process

15. The participants in the regional consultations highlighted the importance of national ownership, with multi-stakeholder involvement and cooperation, for the success of the new agenda. They also underlined the importance for the sustainable development goals of maintaining a positive and inspirational spirit. That could be promoted through a participatory and inclusive approach fostering cooperation and an interactive dialogue between Governments and stakeholders. For its success, the new agenda will require considerable commitment and investment from all sectors of society. Accordingly, the follow-up and review framework needs to combine a bottom-up approach with political leadership at the helm. Incentives to the private sector, coupled with adequate regulatory frameworks, could be used to promote corporate social responsibility in the implementation and follow-up of the new agenda. Civil society should be actively involved from the planning to the evaluation phases through systematic and institutionalized mechanisms and public access to information and data. Participatory mechanisms should ensure that particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, including young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, are reached and involved.

4. Strengthening of statistical capabilities and need for a data revolution

16. The integrity of any follow-up and review framework ultimately depends on the quality of the data and information available. While innovative technological developments will play an increasingly important role in data collection, official data and statistics should be the main source of information for follow-up and review purposes. Significant investment should therefore be made in enhancing the statistical and analytical capabilities of developing countries. The relevance of other

sources of data as a potential supplement was also acknowledged, however. To unmask disparities and identify marginalized groups, enhancing capabilities for the collection and analysis of disaggregated data is critical.

B. Financing for development: messages from the regions

17. In response to General Assembly resolution 68/279, the regional commissions held consultations in preparation for the third International Conference on Financing for Development in their respective regions at the beginning of 2015. The following are the main outcomes and messages from the consultations.

18. ECLAC held its regional consultation in Santiago on 12 and 13 March, in the framework of the twentieth session of Committee of High-level Government Experts. It was a multi-stakeholder event, with the participation of ministers of finance and of foreign affairs, civil society and the private sector. The participants stressed the need for a significant increase in domestic resource mobilization by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection and combating illicit financial flows. Illicit flows were estimated at $154 billion for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2012, exceeding foreign direct investment ($129 billion), representing more than twice the amount of remittances ($63 billion) and 10 times that of ODA to the region ($10 billion). The efforts will require international cooperation by expanding the functions and powers of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

19. Sovereign debt crises and litigation are a matter of particular concern for middle-income countries, which constitute the majority of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, the creation of a debt restructuring framework, with the possibility of debt forgiveness with multilateral institutions for the Caribbean countries, which would include encouraging their climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, is needed. The asymmetries of the global architecture must be addressed, as must the governance of global institutions, which must be universal, inclusive and reflective of the interests, needs and objectives of the international community as a whole. Effectively mobilizing private resources for development involves blending private and public resources and creating public-private partnerships to achieve the leverage required for maximum development financing impact. Efforts to addressing issues surrounding remittances should be coupled with efforts to address the challenges and needs of migrants.

20. ECE organized its regional consultation, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Group in Europe and Central Asia, on 23 March 2015. The main focus of the discussions was to identify strategies and instruments that the region could offer to promote resource mobilization for sustainable development and the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. The participants emphasized that domestic public finance or tax revenue was the largest source of financing directly available to Governments. Public initiatives to strengthen domestic resource mobilization should not be limited to tax policies, however, but also target private sector development and consider the impact of public expenditure. It was recognized that ODA would continue to play an important role, in particular for the least developed countries and countries in conflict or fragile situations. It was noted that, given that the vast majority of the resources that could be tapped were in private hands, the challenge at the third International Conference

on Financing for Development would be to identify ways to redirect those resources to meet the needs of sustainable development. Public initiatives could increase the amount of private investment to achieve the sustainable development goals. Well-designed instruments for effective risk-sharing between the public and private sectors could leverage public funding to bring in much greater private resources. Innovative financing constituted one of the fastest-growing sectors of the sustainable financing landscape and should be an integral part of future strategies for financing for development.

21. In addition to a national enabling environment, it was recognized that international cooperation was critical to stopping illicit financial flows and optimizing tax revenue. Greater transparency in tax matters, including better information on beneficial ownership, was required. Trade and foreign direct investment were major channels for technology transfer. Appropriate trade and investment policies to facilitate access and effective use of technologies for sustainable consumption and production in support of sustainable development were needed. International initiatives must be complemented by the creation of national capacity to absorb and disseminate that technology. A universal monitoring and review framework would be critical to evaluating progress and ensuring accountability in relation to commitments. A mechanism to follow up on the outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development should be linked with the overall follow-up to the post-2015 development agenda.

22. To articulate the priorities of Africa, ECA, jointly with the African Union Commission, organized a multi-stakeholder regional consultation on 23 and 24 March 2015 in Addis Ababa. The outcome took the form of a Chair's summary. The participants reaffirmed that national resources were the primary source of financing for development and therefore should be enhanced by tax reforms that were fair, efficient and transparent. It was stated that it was important to broaden the tax base in African countries by revising current tax exemptions, reviewing tax legislation, combating tax fraud and tackling illicit financial outflows from Africa. There were, however, limits to the levels of national resources that could currently be mobilized by African countries, meaning that ODA remained a key complement to national resources. Development partners must respect their financial pledges in a timely manner and external resources should be allocated to priority sectors in Africa, such as infrastructure and agriculture.

23. It was said that adequate public policies could direct private sector investment to the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Innovative sources of financing, including philanthropy and voluntary contributions, were important instruments for mobilizing capital. Other sources of capital into which African countries could tap included private equity, sovereign wealth and well-designed private-public partnerships. The participants also reaffirmed the importance of multilateral development banks, financial inclusion, providing access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises, South-South cooperation, sovereign debt management and restructuring and commitment to good governance and institutional development. On 31 March 2015, the Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 929 (XLVIII), entitled "Financing for development: Africa's perspectives", in which it endorsed the outcome document of the consultations. It provides further support to African negotiators and underpins the continent's position on the global discussion on financing for development (see E/2015/15/Add.1).

24. ESCWA held its regional consultations in Amman on 7 and 8 April. Many international and regional organizations, members of the private sector, regional development funds and non-governmental organizations also participated. There was a call for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to be applied to the financing for development process and an emphasis that the climate fund should be financed separately from ODA. Participants recognized the importance of remittances as a source of revenue to many countries, but stressed that they were not a substitute for ODA or public finance. Efforts to addressing issues surrounding remittances should also be coupled with efforts to address the rights, needs and priorities of migrants, including through reduced transaction and recruitment fees and by devising financial products to empower them.

25. It was suggested that the outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development should also tackle challenges facing developing countries in mobilizing financial resources owing to unresolved issues relating to international trade and subsidies provided to the agricultural sector in developed countries. Exploring innovative sources of financing, in particular "green *sukuk*", and the development of new models for public-private partnerships could be important sources of additional revenue. While participants expressed appreciation for the critical role of the Arab development funds in financing for development, they also called for an ESCWA feasibility study to establish an Arab bank for reconstruction and development to meet an estimated sustainable development financing gap in the Arab region amounting to $3.6 trillion for the period 2015-2030, with an additional $650 billion needed for post-conflict reconstruction.

26. ESCAP held its regional consultations on 29 and 30 April in Jakarta, co-hosted by the Ministry of Finance of Indonesia, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank Institute, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government of the Russian Federation, and the Green Technology Centre-Korea. The outcome took the form of a Chair's summary, in which the Chair identified key priorities of the region while proposing several specific recommendations, such as renewed efforts to mobilize national sources of financing to address social disparities and income inequalities, including those between the genders. Doing so called for raising tax-to-gross domestic product ratios, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure and making budgeting needs more gender-sensitive. It was recommended that the region should enhance cooperation in tax matters by setting up an Asia-Pacific tax forum. Incentives must also be provided to cities and subnational governments to mobilize resources and to the private sector to invest in high-quality infrastructure and contribute to sustainable development, including through public-private partnerships. The Chair also called for efforts to ensure that unmet ODA commitments were fulfilled and that ODA was deployed more strategically, according priority to those countries that needed it the most, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Other potential sources included $218 billion in remittances, $492 billion in foreign direct investment, $4 trillion in fiscal revenues and $6 trillion in private savings. In addition, the stock of financial assets of the region's most wealthy individuals amounted to $35 trillion in 2013.

27. A critical issue was how to enhance country capacity and regulatory frameworks for the effective functioning of national capital markets. The importance of Islamic finance was recognized, notably in providing capital for

micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The participants welcomed the financing of national and transboundary connectivity by the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and encouraged close cooperation between new and existing multilateral development banks for the promotion of sustainable and resilient infrastructure in the region. There was a call for private businesses in the region to bolster social-impact investing and venture philanthropy to fund education, health and environmental protection, in particular at the community level. It was important for the region to enhance North-South, South-South cooperation and triangular development cooperation, including with the private sector for sustainable development.

C. Supporting action on climate change: the role of the regional commissions

28. Given the development implications associated with a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the regional commissions have been engaged in supporting their constituencies in preparation for the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015.

29. The African Climate Policy Centre of ECA has identified the following three critical areas of support: supporting the participation of Africa in global governance, raising awareness of the implications of the climate change agreements for Africa and supporting African States in the implementation of their intended nationally determined contributions. Those areas of support complement activities that the Centre conducts as part of its overall operational activities under the Climate for Development in Africa programme.

30. The African Climate Policy Centre is providing critical technical backstopping support to the African group of negotiators to ensure that key research findings are fed into negotiation strategies and reflect essential pivots for a common African position. In the run-up to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties, the Centre has planned regional forums in East, West/Central, South and North Africa, where key stakeholders will engage in debate to raise awareness of the emerging climate agreement and its implications for Africa. The forums are expected to increase public awareness of climate change at the highest political level, elicit critical civil society reflection and inform the positions of Africa on the key issues relating to the post-2015 climate agreement. In addition to providing wider support to African small island developing States, the Centre will establish a regional climate observation centre to serve West Africa and the small island developing States, thereby enhancing capacity that will further enable the implementation of intended nationally determined contributions in specific small island developing States.

31. ECE carries out multiple activities that have an impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Some highlights over the recent period include: revised recommendations to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on carbon capture and storage in energy production and oil recovery; a compilation of best policy practices for promoting energy efficiency; an analysis of climate change impacts and adaptation for international transport networks, which was

prepared to assist the work of the Group of Experts on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for International Transport Networks; the continuing implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy; a publication, *Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Lessons Learned and Good Practices*, relating to pilot projects under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes; the endorsement of the recommendations on climate change statistics by the Conference of European Statisticians in April 2014, aimed at improving the statistics relating to climate change collected by national statistical offices; and the environmental performance reviews for Croatia, Morocco and the Republic of Moldova, which included a dedicated chapter on climate change.

32. ECE being an active member of UN-Energy, its programme of work on sustainable energy is aimed at providing access to affordable and clean energy to all, in line with the goals of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, and to help in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector. ECE works closely with other organizations in the United Nations system, in particular the other regional commissions, to deliver on Sustainable Energy for All and reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

33. In the framework of the Climate Summit held in New York in 2014, ECLAC launched a report, *The Economics of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean: Paradoxes and Challenges*, in which the costs of the expected impacts of climate change in Latin American and the Caribbean are estimated and it is pointed out that the region must urgently design and implement adaptation strategies that include a long-term vision and take into account collateral impacts. The report provided relevant information for negotiators and the public towards the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change on sustainable production and consumption patterns, risk management and adaptation to climate change, among others. ECLAC will again deliver its regional findings and progress to the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-first session.

34. Furthermore, ECLAC and the United Nations Environment Programme are jointly supporting the regional meetings of the chief negotiators for climate change of Latin America and the Caribbean (held in May and October 2014 and 2015 in Lima and Santiago), an initiative of the ministries of foreign affairs of Brazil and Chile to strengthen the position of Latin American and Caribbean countries in the upcoming climate change agreement. ECLAC also continued to provide technical assistance to many countries in the region, including for the preparation of the intended nationally determined contributions.

35. Given that the Asia-Pacific region accounts for much of the global burden of deaths and economic losses owing to disasters, the work of ESCAP has focused on strengthening regional cooperation to tackle climate-related risks and vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience to climate impacts. Its work on climate change aims to assist member States in turning the climate crisis into opportunities for economic growth and poverty reduction. In line therewith, ESCAP has sought to assist member States by mainstreaming climate change mitigation into development through technical assistance and capacity development, analytical work and e-learning tools. It has also sought to link climate change mitigation with climate finance.

36. ESCAP has led several initiatives in the past, including the establishment of the Mekong River Commission, the ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Typhoon Committee, the WMO/ESCAP Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the ESCAP Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, which have contributed substantially to addressing hydro-meteorological disasters in the region. The foundations of regional cooperation have been built on common river-basin, ocean-basin and agricultural ecosystems. In February 2015, ESCAP hosted the third joint session of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones and the Typhoon Committee. The joint session led to an agreement that established a new cooperative arrangement between the two platforms, for sharing of second-generation meteorological satellite data and products as well as advanced modelling skills for improved forecasting and early warning. In addition, ESCAP has strengthened regional cooperation platforms, including the long-standing Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development, that tailor programmes for high-risk, low-capacity developing countries by providing greater access to innovative forms of technology, especially space applications for effective disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. The ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries, established since 2004, continues to play a key role in strengthening end-to-end early warning systems for coastal multi-hazards. It also made a major contribution to the establishment of the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia, an intergovernmental institution of which the products and services — including tsunami forecasting, risk assessment, evacuation mapping, monitoring and forecasting of severe weather, and seasonal climate outlooks — have proved particularly useful for countries with limited national capacity.

37. In the Pacific, where climate change is regarded as the single biggest threat to the livelihoods and future of people and where migration is seen as an adaptive option, ESCAP, together with the International Labour Organization and UNDP, has initiated a European Union-funded project on enhancing the capacity of Pacific island countries to manage the impact of climate change on migration. The project focuses on Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu, where assistance is provided to develop migration indicators and share information on labour migration, gather data on community attitudes to migration induced by climate change, develop climate change responses and national action to mitigate the risk of displacement and enhance the capacity to participate effectively in regional, bilateral and global schemes on labour migration and discussions on the implications of climate change for displacement and relocation.

38. In the Arab region, ESCWA has been actively supporting member States in relation to climate change negotiations, assessment, adaptation and mitigation. Specifically, it has been coordinating with the League of Arab States to conduct climate change negotiation workshops to build capacity and foster intergovernmental dialogue and also to hold discussions before the midterm and formal negotiation sessions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These were held in 2013 (Amman), 2014 (Amman and Kuwait) and 2015 (Qatar and Oman).

39. In addition, ESCWA is coordinating a regional initiative on the impact of climate change on water resources and socioeconomic vulnerability in the Arab region with 10 United Nations entities, the League of Arab States and international

expert institutions under the auspices of, and in consultation with, the Arab Ministerial Water Council, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment and the Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology. The initiative has generated regional climate change projections and hydrological projections for the Arab region, which are being complemented by a vulnerability analysis focused on five key sectors. The inputs and outputs of the initiative are providing a platform for regional priority-setting and policy formulation among Arab States on key climate change priorities. The initiative is also supporting the establishment of an Arab climate outlook forum to support consensus-building and dialogue on regional climate prediction and projection, and is also establishing a regional knowledge hub to provide policymakers and their advisers and researchers with a regional source of information on climate change assessment, as well as adaptation tools appropriate for the Arab region that draw upon the climate change assessment findings. ESCWA is also supporting work on climate change mitigation, with projects and technical assistance being provided to member States in the area of energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate change financing.

II. Developments in selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation

A. Additional policy issues addressed by the regional commissions at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings

40. The eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development were held in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 March 2015 on the theme "Implementing Agenda 2063: planning, mobilizing and financing for development".

41. The participants explored key issues relating to Agenda 2063 in general and the associated first 10-year plan in particular, including implementation arrangements and capacities, integration in national and regional development plans, monitoring and evaluation, financing strategies, stakeholder participation, partnerships and communication. The Conference of Ministers adopted resolutions on major policy issues in which it invited ECA and the African Union Commission to convene, on a biennial basis, the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development; mandated ECA, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and other stakeholders to undertake work in such key areas as domestic resource mobilization, illicit financial flows, the financing of Agenda 2063 and the involvement of civil society organizations in the implementation of the 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063; and encouraged all member States to adopt the African Social Development Index and mainstream it into their national development plans.

42. At the time of writing, the seventy-first session of ESCAP was to be held from 25 to 29 May 2015 under the theme "Balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: from integration to implementation". The session was to feature a ministerial round table on the theme; a ministerial panel on the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015*; a high-level consultation of the Group of 20; a high-level dialogue on the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA)

Pathway; and a special exhibition on sustainable development. ESCAP will also convene the second Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific to support the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific (Commission resolution 70/1), in December 2015.

43. The sixty-sixth session of ECE was held in Geneva from 14 to 16 April 2015. Member States endorsed a high-level statement on the post-2015 development agenda and expected sustainable development goals in the ECE region, in which they committed themselves to sustainable development from the local to the global levels. Among other things, member States recalled that ECE was a results-driven organization that developed best practices and standards agreements that served as catalysts for action in its member States and around the world and that it was ideally placed to continue to make a strong contribution to sustainable development for current and future generations.

44. The thirtieth session of the Committee of the Whole of ECLAC was held in New York on 19 and 20 March 2015. At the session, the Committee adopted three resolutions: one in which it granted Norway admission as a member of the Commission; one in which it took note of the Santiago Decision on the application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean; and one in which it convened an extraordinary session of the Committee to consider a draft resolution on a Latin American and Caribbean forum on sustainable development. As mentioned above, the Committee subsequently held an extraordinary session on 16 April in Santiago, at which it launched a consultative process with the Governments of the region aimed at establishing the forum.

45. In the framework of the follow-up to the fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", the regional commissions held regional reviews, in partnership and collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. ECE held its regional review meeting on 6 and 7 November 2014 in Geneva, with an outcome in the form of Co-Chairs' conclusions.

46. ESCAP convened the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment from 17 to 20 November 2014 in Bangkok. Participants adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. ECA held the ninth African Regional Conference on Women from 17 to 19 November 2014 in Addis Ababa, resulting in the adoption of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Accelerating the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

47. ECLAC held the fifty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago from 17 to 19 November 2014, which resulted in the adoption of a statement. ESCWA convened the intergovernmental Arab High-Level Conference on Progress Achieved in Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action after 20 Years, from 2 to 3 February 2015 in Cairo, which concluded with the adoption of a declaration on justice and equality for women in the Arab region. The key findings from the regions, and the main policy recommendations and strategies for future action of all regional outcome documents, underscored the important role of the regional

commissions in the follow-up to and implementation of the regional reviews. Across all regions, gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls were increasingly recognized as key to creating stronger and more sustainable societies for all, and thus central to development planning.

B. Coherence at the regional level

1. Regional coordination mechanisms

48. ESCWA convened the twentieth meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab region on 11 December 2014 in Beirut. Participants addressed two key issues: the role of the United Nations in a rapidly changing political environment marked by conflict and crisis four years after the Arab uprisings, and how to enhance the regional processes in support of a new sustainable development framework and the post-2015 development agenda. Recognizing the magnitude and possible irreversibility of the impact of conflicts on the region, as well as their economic, social and political ramifications, participants emphasized the regional imperative of overcoming the deficiencies of past approaches to development and improving coherence across interventions. The representatives of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States agreed to collectively identify and advocate cross-cutting regional priorities, such as occupation, young people, migration, refugees and internally displaced persons; to continue to advance regional priorities in the articulation of the sustainable development goals; to support data collection, monitoring and analysis in the context of the post-2015 development agenda; and to engage with the regional consultations on the World Humanitarian Summit.

49. During the reporting period, the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific focused its work on articulating the perspectives of the United Nations system in the region on the post-2015 development agenda and on the implementation of the ASEAN-United Nations comprehensive partnership. The ASEAN-United Nations workplan for 2015, adopted at the ASEAN-United Nations summit in November 2014 in Myanmar, outlines priorities for cooperation in all the pillars of the joint declaration on the comprehensive partnership.

50. The following are some of the key highlights of the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific: the development of the second phase of the ASEAN-United Nations Strategic Plan of Cooperation on Disaster Management; the convening of the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment from 17 to 20 November 2014 in Bangkok; the development of the Regional Guiding Framework for Achieving Zero Hunger; and the publication of the first Asia and the Pacific report on youth, launched at a special commemorative session of the General Assembly marking the twentieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, held in May 2015 in New York.

51. The sixteenth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa was held on the margins of the joint annual meetings of the Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and of Economy and Finance, in March 2015, to provide an opportunity for senior United Nations officials to engage directly with ministers responsible for finance, planning and economic development on pertinent issues relating to the African development

agenda. The Mechanism was requested to align its structure with and focus its support on the strategic plan for 2014-2017 of the African Union Commission, the 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 and the Common African Position on the post-2015 development agenda.

52. A new programme for the United Nations-African Union partnership, anchored on Agenda 2063, was endorsed at the session and will be adopted by the African Union in June 2015. Subsequently, it will be submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly in September 2015. With the support of the Africa Group based in New York, the necessary action should then be taken to ensure that the new framework is adequately resourced and is included in the 2016-2017 budget cycle of the United Nations. United Nations agencies, organizations, funds and programmes will also need to include in their budgetary processes their programmes of support for the African Union and Agenda 2063 in the context of the Mechanism.

53. The secretariat of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, housed at ECA, has developed a handbook and toolkit providing basic guidance on how the resources of the Mechanism may best be harnessed for the benefit of Africa. The handbook addresses the various facets of collaboration and coordination in programming, monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilization and the linkages between regional and subregional coordination to ensure the realization of the transformation agenda in Africa. Key achievements of the Mechanism include addressing the cost of hunger in Africa through analyses of the cost of not addressing nutrition for a nation's economy and finances; providing support to the efforts of the African Union Commission to combat Ebola in West Africa, considered to be an example of good practice in joint efforts; undertaking activities in support of the economic empowerment of women with a view to attaining food and nutrition security and bioenergy development; and providing support to the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, with a view to tackling corruption, combating illicit financial flows from Africa and strengthening institutional capacity in terms of public financial management.

54. In Europe and Central Asia, the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group continued to focus on the global post-2015 development process and the lessons that could be derived from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals by publishing in February 2015 a joint report entitled "The Millennium Development Goals in Europe and Central Asia: lessons on monitoring and implementation of the MDGs for the post-2015 agenda, based upon five illustrative case studies". Some of the lessons referred to the complexity of the adaptation and disaggregation of global goals and indicators at the national level to track progress and the problems in the practical implementation at the national and regional levels, including in relation to accountability, financing, coordination and transboundary implications. The Mechanism set up an inter-agency regional thematic group on non-communicable diseases and social, economic and environmental determinants of health, led by the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe and based on the Health 2020 framework.

55. The meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Latin America and the Caribbean was convened by ECLAC in Santiago on 7 October 2014. The Deputy Secretary-General addressed the participants by videoconference. United Nations system regional leaders analysed the process of economic deceleration in Latin America and the Caribbean and the risk of stagnation in the social sphere,

strategizing collectively about how the United Nations could best contribute, with the countries in the region, to adequately addressing the multidimensional development challenges before them. The Mechanism agreed to continue focusing on ways to strengthen the positioning of the United Nations system in the region to optimize the support that it provided to all stakeholders in member States, placing sustainability and equality at the centre of the agenda. ECLAC agreed to coordinate a final inter-agency report assessing the progress achieved in efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals during the period 2000-2015, to be submitted to member States in the middle of 2015.

2. Engagement with non-United Nations organizations in the region

56. In pursuit of their mandate to build regional consensus on shared priorities and common solutions to common problems, including by providing regional hubs for sharing development knowledge and good practices among the regions, the regional commissions continued to work closely with regional and subregional organizations. During the reporting period, ECE worked on reinforcing ties in its region and beyond, with, among others, the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the secretariat of the Integration Committee of the Eurasian Economic Community and the Eurasian Economic Commission. ECLAC continued to actively support the work of regional and subregional intergovernmental integration bodies such as the Caribbean Community, the Central American Integration System, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) through knowledge products to promote regional integration, support the projection of a concerted voice from Latin America and the Caribbean in international meetings and global conferences and strengthen the region in its dialogue with other regions. For example, ECLAC collaborated with CELAC, during the Second Summit of CELAC, held in Havana in January 2014, on five substantive documents on public policies for equality, education, financial architecture, natural resources governance and the regional economic panorama. ECLAC also prepared technical input for the first China-CELAC Forum and the third European Union-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government, in 2015. Lastly, in the lead-up to the third International Conference on Financing for Development, ECLAC has strengthened its collaboration with regional development banks such as the Development Bank of Latin American, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Latin America Reserve Fund, in addition to other emerging entities.

57. ESCWA has collaborated closely with the League of Arab States, through its ministerial councils, in defining regional priorities and articulating regional positions for the post-2015 development agenda. ESCWA, also in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme, led the preparations for the second session of the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Bahrain in May 2015. ESCWA also engages with intergovernmental bodies such as the subsidiary bodies of the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as non-governmental organizations and regional research institutes and foundations. The Commission's strategic partnerships with these entities are aimed at influencing development policies, enhancing the impact of its interventions and building regional capacity and consensus around key issues.

58. In the framework of the ASEAN-United Nations workplan for 2015, ESCAP has continued to support ASEAN in the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, including through the development of an integrated transport and logistics system, the implementation of trade facilitation measures, including the ASEAN single window, and the strengthening of the national statistical systems of ASEAN member States, including monitoring requirements for the Millennium Development Goals. ESCAP has also developed a Pacific strategy to support the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway, adopted at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, which involves enhanced engagement with the Pacific regional organizations, the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat, the secretariat of the Pacific Community, the secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Islands Development Programme. ESCAP has also strengthened its cooperation with the secretariat of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation by organizing a joint consultation on post-2015 development agenda in Nagarkot, Nepal, in August 2014, in conjunction with the ESCAP/Asian Development Bank/UNDP regional Millennium Development Goals partnership. ESCAP has also established coordination with the Association in other areas, including for women's empowerment, trade facilitation and transport connectivity. ESCAP, jointly with ECE, is reinforcing the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia as an important instrument for post-2015 development agenda.

59. ECA, through the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, continued to strength cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. ECA has provided support to the African Union and its organs through the implementation of continental programmes, which are based on the priorities of the Union, in particular the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, in addition to activities to promote advocacy for the Union, NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism and the regional economic communities. Other activities included assessment reports on the transition to a green economy and associated challenges; technical advisory services and facilitation of stakeholder engagement on decent employment creation, employment for young people and women, poverty eradication, and fostering inclusive development in Africa; and strengthening the effective governance and regulation of labour migration and mobility in Africa and social protection. In the area of peace and security, efforts were made to respond to needs and requirements of African Union programmes and the enhancement and coordination of short-term operations.

C. Enhanced interregional cooperation among the regional commissions

60. Since the past reporting period, the executive secretaries of the regional commissions have met on four occasions: on 3 July 2014 in New York, on the margins of the high-level political forum and the Economic and Social Council; in September 2014 in New York, on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly and high-level events; in December 2014, through videoconferencing; and on 19 March 2015 in Turin, Italy, on the margins of the United Nations senior managers' retreat. The meetings provided opportunities to make progress in respect

of many items on the regional agendas mentioned herein, in a concerted and consensual manner, such as on regional consultations on the issue of accountability in the post-2015 development agenda, on providing input to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet", on modalities for bringing the outcomes of the regional consultations to the global process of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, in July 2015, and on strategic initiatives for interregional policy cooperation. The regional commissions also contributed in a concerted manner to the ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and China on the theme "Governance of natural resources and industrialization", held in Tarija, Plurinational State of Bolivia, on 28 and 29 November 2014.

61. Building upon the criteria defined in 2014 to guide enhanced interregional cooperation, the regional commissions are jointly implementing several Development Account projects in areas such as equality, statistics, trade and investment, connectivity for landlocked countries, young people, gender, social protection, resilience to disasters, environmental capital valuation and renewable energy. In particular, two projects reflect the commitment and readiness of the regional commissions to support their member countries through the best effective expertise of the regional commissions:

(a) The project entitled "Promoting equality: strengthening the capacity of selected developing countries to design and implement equality-oriented public policies and programmes", the main objective of which is to strengthen countries' capacities to implement multidisciplinary public policies oriented towards greater socioeconomic equality;

(b) The project entitled "Programme for statistics and data", which will focus on the establishment or strengthening of national coordination mechanisms and strategy for monitoring the sustainable development goals, building on existing national strategies for the development of statistics.